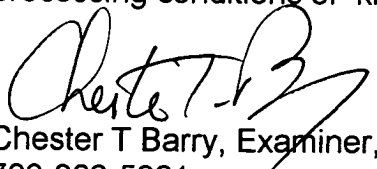


Claims 15 – 28 are rejected under 35 USC 103 over Suzuki, Kanel, and Story. Suzuki describes a process in which aeration tank 2 receives input as well as treated sludge 13. The sludge from settler 4 – in pertinent part - is “converted” in the following manners: In Fig. 2, effective conversion is by ozonation. In Fig. 3, homogenization is by exposure to a 4000 rpm sword-shaped impeller 26. Microorganisms in the excess sludge are sheared by the impeller. Insofar as an “organic liquid” ultimately results from starting material (excess sludge) which began as a solid / liquid slurry, it can only be said that the homogenization inherently meets mechanical energy input recited in claim 1. It would have been obvious to have used a combination of both method, in either order if by separate vessels, or simultaneously if by but one vessel.

Alternatively, it would have been obvious to have employed both mechanical energy as well as ozonization because it was known that the former method disrupts bacteria cell walls, as shown for example by, Kanel (claim 7), while ozonization was known to rupture cell membranes, as shown for example by Story. It was widely known that the cell membrane and cell wall together constitute the periphery of bacteria.

The limitations of claims 16 – 28 are either described by Suzuki, suggested by Kanel or Story, or would have resulted from routine experimentation to arrive at optimal processing conditions of known result effective variables, such as pH (for example).


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